



City of Yakima

NEWS RELEASE

Subject: Miller Park Community Center Improvement Project

Contact: City Manager Tony O'Rourke – 575-6040

Communications & Public Affairs Dir. Randy Beehler – 901-1142

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Washington Fruit Funding Will Help Refurbish Aging Community Center

Washington Fruit and Produce, Co., one of the pioneers of the Yakima Valley's agriculture industry, has pledged substantial funding over the next five years to refurbish a building that currently houses programs provided by the City of Yakima's Gang Free Initiative ("GFI") and the Yakima Police Activities League ("YPAL").

Details about Washington Fruit's gift and how it will be used to upgrade the building will be unveiled at a **news conference on Tuesday, March 11th at 10:30 am** at what is now called the **Miller Park Community Center, 602 North 4th Street**.

Washington Fruit Operations Manager Tommy Hanses, Yakima City Council member Dave Ettl, GFI Consultant Steve Magallan, and YPAL Board President Ed Shoenbach are expected to speak during the news conference.

Originally built in the 1970s as Yakima's Senior Center, the building is now used by both YPAL and as the GFI's Northeast Yakima Youth and Family Development Center. A variety of programs and activities are offered through the facility that specifically target at-risk kids, providing them with skills to help them be successful. The improvements that will be made to the building thanks to Washington Fruit's contribution will allow GFI and YPAL programs and activities to provide even greater benefits to the community.

Being able to help upgrade the aging building struck a cord with Washington Fruit executives since many of the company's employees live in the neighborhoods that surround the community center.

"The men and women who work for Washington Fruit are truly the backbone of the company," said Hanses. "Whenever an opportunity comes along to improve the lives of our employees and their families, we take advantage of it. Being able to contribute to refurbishing the community center is something Washington Fruit is proud to do," said Hanses.

Founded nearly 100 years ago by Fred Plath, Washington Fruit, which has grown to become a prominent grower, packer, and shipper of produce and a major Yakima employer, has a long history of supporting a variety of local charitable organizations.

"Yakima is blessed to have wonderful corporate partners like Washington Fruit who generously fund programs and services that help make our community better," said O'Rourke. "The City is grateful that Washington Fruit has made a long term commitment to enhancing the community center so that it can continue to serve kids and families for many years to come."

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